

The Easiness of Christ's Yoke.

A 3,
S E R M O N
O N

Matthew xi. 28---30.

P R E A C H ' D

In the Parish Churches of *West-Ham, Essex,*

A N D

St. Olave's Hart-street, London,

B Y

The Reverend Mr. *WILLIAM DODD,*

Lecturer of those Parishes, K

Παντες εν ανθρωποι δια την της αμαρτιας φουσιν, κα-
τινυτες και πεσποτισμενοι καλυνται επι την κερ-
αν λογον το Θεον ανκεταυσιν. ORIG. cont, CELL.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways and see,
and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and
walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls,
JER. vi. 16.

L O N D O N

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T O

The Right Rev. Father in GOD
THOMAS SHERLOCK,

Lord Bishop of LONDON;

So highly and justly Esteemed and Honoured,

F O R

His late excellent and useful Discourses,
no less than his other nervous and unanswerable

D E F E N C E S

Of the CHRISTIAN FAITH,

This S E R M O N,

Is, with the highest Respect and Veneration,
most humbly inscribed and commended

By his LORDSHIP's

Most Dutiful, Faithful, and

Obedient Son and Servant,

WILLIAM DODD.

Plaslow, Jan. 31, 1756.

TO
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THOMAS SHERRLOCK

Lord Bishop of London;
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FOR
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DEFECTION
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

THIS SERMON

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most humbly inscribed and commended

By his LORDSHIP

M^{ts} Daniel Tregidg, and

Obadiah Ben and Tregidg,

WILLIAM DODD.

London, Nov. 21. 1756.



St. Matthew xi. 28, 29, 30.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls.

For my Yoke is easy, and my burden is light.



IF the greatness of the Speaker, if the importance of his message, if the affectionate manner of his Address are at all times sufficient to engage the attention of the Hearer, surely the passage, I have read to you, above all others, must demand your most serious and particular regard. It is *Christ*, the al-

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mighty Redeemer, the Son of the most High; he into whose hands, as our mediator, all things are delivered of his Father, he unto whom all power in Heaven and Earth is given, who yet in himself is God equal with the Father, God of God, and light of light; even he who shall come in the clouds to judge all the ends of the earth; nay, and who shall judge them, by * those very words which he himself delivered; --- It is this wonderful person who *speaks*, declaring at once his great willingness to receive, and his own supreme † power to give that rest and peace to the soul, which is the pursuit of every son of Adam, and which is the gift of his religion only: For no man, saith he, knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son

* See John xii. 48.

† He manifests here his own supreme power and authority, in that he does not say as *Moses and the Prophets*, Come unto the Lord, and he will give you, &c. or the Lord hath said, Come, &c. but Come unto ME, and I will give you, &c. I whom the Father hath sealed, besides whom there is no Saviour, none other able or willing to save. For there is Salvation in no other. See, *Isaiah xlii. 1.* *Acts iv. 12.* And all things, saith he, are delivered unto me of my Father, &c. *Matt. xi. 27.*

will reveal him, ver. 27. And his invitation is important, containing the sum of the whole gospel, glad tidings indeed to every oppressed and heavy-laden soul. That nothing may deter us from accepting it, see with what affectionate tenderness he invites to him, not the * great, the happy, and the powerful, not the merry-hearted, and the sons of joy, but all that labour, and are heavy laden, all that are under the bondage of sin and sorrow: And he calls them, not with a desire to manifest their miseries, to punish their offences, or to display his own glory, but solely with a view to their happiness and salvation. "Come, says he, come to me, I entreat and advise you to come, and behold I will give you rest; I myself will relieve and release you from your heavy burdens; come to me, and ye shall find perfect rest and peace to your souls." The † world says, Come to me, and I will fail you; the flesh says, Come to me and I will destroy you; *Christ* says, Come to me

* In the 25th Verse of this Chapter, Father I thank thee, says *Jesus*, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *BABES*. See 1 Cor. i. 26 and the following verses.

† See St. *Barnard*. *Mundus clamat, ego deficiam, &c.*

and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, *for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

“ Oh most grateful burden, (says St. Chrysostom) which more comforts them that carry it; the burdens of earthly masters gradually wear out the strength of those who bear them: But the burden of Christ more assists the bearer of it, because we carry not grace, but grace us.”

And can it be possible, that creatures of a day like us, can it be possible, that mortals, * *who have but a short time to live, and are full of misery, who come up and are cut down like a flower, who flee, as it were a shadow, and never continue in one stay;* can it be possible that they should reject and disregard a call so full of love, so full of affection, of such infinite consequence, of such unspeakable advantage? Can they reject the love of him, who, to give them rest, took their burdens upon himself; who, to deliver them from bondage, became himself a slave; and who, after all his sufferings, desires them only to come, to take

* See Job xiv. 1, 2, and the Burial Service.

his easy yoke, instead of their own oppressive burden; to leave sin and sorrow, and to become his disciples; to love and obey him, and so to be happy? Can it be possible that we should despise such grace, refuse such proffers, fly from rest thus freely propos'd to us, and choose instead to bear the heavy yoke of sin, and to labour beneath the oppressive load of an unappeas'd and unquiet conscience?— Oh, that we would all consider, that we would well weigh the infinite gain of an unreserv'd approach to *Christ*, of freely taking his easy yoke and light burden upon us; then should we soon discover that the *loss* thereby sustained, would be by far the greater Part of the *gain*; for the loss would be only of trouble and grief, the gain entirely of rest and repose.

But present objects strike so strongly on the human sight, that we have no eyes for spiritual things, removed from the view of sense, and seen only by the eye of faith: And though in reality, every man born of woman, is thus *heavy-laden* and oppress'd, though all men are not only sinners, but
also

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also afflicted with many outward evils to remind them thereof, (for * nothing upon earth is perfectly happy, and death at least is an universal monitor of sin to all mankind) though all are really thus heavy-laden; yet while *the things that are seen* chiefly engross our attention, the inward malady of the soul is but little heeded: soon as it pleases God in his wisdom to scourge and chasten us, soon as our kind Father lays his correcting hand upon us, then, for the most part, — burden'd with worldly afflictions, *temporal things* no longer capable of amusing and engaging us, — then, we turn our eyes inward; then the spiritual grievances of our Souls appear to us, and then we are glad and willing to embrace *Christ's* proposal of

* It required no Revelation to teach this; all mankind from the Fall have had sufficient proof of it from their own experience, and a heathen poet could say,

Nihil est ab omni

Parte beatum. Hor. lib. II. ode 16.

Nothing is completely blest. FRANCIS.

But how beautifully is it set forth by *Solomon*, in his divine writings, than whom no man had greater opportunities to prove the extent of all human happiness, and the sum of his experience is this, *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* Eccl. i. 2.

rest

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rest and repose. Here we see the great * advantage of affliction: For that must be highly advantageous, which causes the soul to come to *Christ*; and none can come, for none are invited, but the *labouring and heavy-laden*.

Hence we find in the gospel that all, who came to *Jesus*, for relief, did labour and were heavy-laden, were oppress'd with the burdens of sin and sorrow, and so brought to him: and each one of them was intended to point out to us, not only

* Dr. *Young* has beautifully enlarg'd upon this truth, in words which every Christian must feel.

Great God of wonders, (if thy *love* survey'd
Aught else the name of wonderful retains)

What rocks are these on which to build our trust?

Thy ways admit no blemish: none I find,

Or this alone, "*That none is to be found.*"

Not one to soften *censures* hardy crime,

Not one to palliate peevish grief's complaints

Who, like a Demon, murmur from the dust,

Dares into judgment, call her judge—SUPREME.

For all I bless thee, most for the *severe*:

Her death, my own at hand, the fiery gulph,

That flaming bound of wrath omnipotent!

It thunders; but it thunders to preserve:

It strengthens, what it strikes: its wholesome dread

Averts the dreaded pain: its hideous groans

Join Heav'n's sweet Hallelujahs in thy praise,

Great source of good alone!—How kind in all

In vengeance, kind! Pain, death, Gehenna, *SAVE*.

Night Thoughts Consolation.

the

the proper manner of coming to *Christ*, but also those spiritual maladies, that *spiritual leprosy*, and *possession*, that spiritual blindness, deafness, dumbness, deadness, yea that deprivation of all spiritual health and soundness, and that utter inability to every good work, which are, to corrupt human nature, the unhappy consequences of our first parent's transgression. And, as I propose to enlarge upon these examples, it seemed not improper, and, I hope, will not be unprofitable to introduce my intended discourses, with this pathetic invitation of our Lord; wherein, we see that *ALL* are invited to him, and that all are in a proper state to *come*, when *labouring and heavy-laden*.

In speaking to these words, three particulars naturally occur to our observation: First, in them we have an *invitation*, *Come unto ME*; secondly, the persons invited, those, who will be the acceptable guests, *All ye that labour* and are *heavy laden*; and, thirdly, what such shall receive, namely, *rest*, and what they must do, in order to the receiving it, who come to *Christ* as their Priest, Prophet, and King, to be saved, taught, and ruled by him; *I will give you rest*, on condition

dition that you come to me, Take my Yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; so shall ye find rest to your souls; rest to your souls, by learning of me, and taking my Yoke upon you, for my Yoke is easy, and my burden is light. In which, as well as in the coming to Christ, is set forth the duty of those, who are invited, or what they must do on their parts, who desire rest to their souls from him: since very vain and deceitful will all hopes of rest be found to such, as do not come to Christ, as do not take his Yoke upon them, and learn of him, to be meek and lowly in heart.

Ist, Then here is an invitation, Come to Me; the word in the original * *Deure*, come, expresses not so much a command, as a friendly request; a familiar exhorting, begging and desiring that we would do any thing,

* Leigh, in his *Critica sacra*, observes; *Est hoc ad-verbium hortantis simul & accersentis; usurpatur ab illis qui humanissime incitant & hortantur ad aliquid faciendum: imprimis autem quæ sunt grata & jucunda.* Chemnitius also in his harmony makes the same remark: To him I am indebted for many excellent observations, nay, and indeed for much matter, as the learned reader will see in the course of these sermons, and as I shall fully acknowledge in the general preface, which I propose to deliver at the conclusion of them.

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particularly what is pleasant and profitable to us: as much as to say, Come, I pray, I advise and beseech you. And, in this view the love of *Christ* is exceedingly magnified, “Come, says he, come, I beseech, I earnestly exhort, I advise and entreat you, as your best friend, *come unto me; unto me, who came into the world solely to call you to repentance and life; unto me, who invite you only to bestow rest and peace and joy upon you: unto me, who am ever ready and willing to receive you; unto me, who am your only hope, rock and trust; to whom, whosoever cometh, he shall in no wise be cast out; in whom whosoever believeth, he shall never die, but have everlasting life, For he that COMETH to me shall never hunger, and he that BELIEVETH on me shall never thirst.*” *

And upon Encouragement like this, what should keep thee back? — What, oh man, should detain thee from coming to this Lord, when thus he not only invites,

* See St. *John* xi. 25, 26. and vi. 35, 36, 37, &c. Whoever carefully reads this chapter, as well as the next, of this Evangelist, cannot want to be informed, that *coming to Christ* is used as an equivalent term to *believing* in him.

but,

but, so unbounded is his love, so great his desire of thy soul's eternal health, thus pressing entreats, thus familiarly advises thee to come to him? To him, who has all power in heaven and in earth. — Well may we rejoice in such an advocate and ransom; — to him, who hath the keys of death and of hell, * *who openeth, and no man shutteth, who shutteth, and no man openeth.*

But that none may deceive themselves, or expect that the Father should reveal the Son to them, should give them rest from sin here, or from its wages hereafter; you find our Lord offers his rest upon this condition or necessary qualification only, that *We do indeed come to him.* Unless we come, we can never expect to be received, unless we seek, we can never hope to find. This is our part: And as the poor afflicted blind, and lame, deaf and dumb, &c. came to Christ in person, when present upon earth; so now must we, afflicted with spiritual evils, come, by faith, to him our great mediator, whose ears are ever open to our prayers, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us, in Hea-

† Revelation iii. 7,

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ven. He is the same Lord, equally willing to hear, equally ready and able to save: the same yesterday, to day and forever: and *whenever* we come to him, by sincere faith, hungry and thirsting after his righteousness, heavy-laden and labouring under our burden, desiring, seeking, asking, believing; most certain it is, that his divine promise will be made good to us; we shall be comforted by that blessed Spirit, *who is the very comforter*, * and thus find rest to our souls. For Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot, or one tittle of his word and faithful promise shall not pass away †.

As thus we can receive nothing from him, unless we come to him, so shall we not desire to receive rest from him, unless we feel a want of it. They, who are perfectly at ease, the world at peace with them, and they well satisfied with themselves, in whose land no mighty famine hath yet arisen; they who are under no remorse for sin, no terrors for its punishment; who either think it no burden, or expect to be justified by their own merits and de-

* See the second hymn in the *Ordering of the Priests*.

† See St. *Matt.* v. 18, xxiv. 35.

servings without the blood of a Redeemer:—These, as experiencing no *want* of rest, can have no longing desires for it, and of consequence will never *come* to *Christ* to seek and sue for it; wherefore we find, that this invitation is made,

Idly, Only to those that *labour and are heavy-laden*; but to *ALL* of these, *Come unto me, All ye that labour, &c.* and as all men are sinners, and so *heavy-laden*, whether they feel and confess it or not, this invitation, like redemption, is universal, and extended to all mankind; a word of inexpressible comfort to every afflicted and heavy-laden soul; and a sufficient answer to all the espousers of that horrible doctrine of election and reprobation, which supposes the grace of God *denied* to some, and *confined* only to those who are elect from the beginning, according to some *secret* and *hidden* decree of God. To all such impious positions, which make the God of *love*, a God of the greatest injustice, these sweet and refreshing words of our Lord are a sufficient, and perhaps the best, reply,—*Come unto Me, All, — All ye that labour and are heavy-laden*, I except, I reject none, for

every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him, that knocketh it shall be opened *. He invites not *the rich*, and the full, *the increased with goods*, that have need of nothing, but those that see and acknowledge themselves to be *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* †. From these he removes all scruples of unworthiness, “Bring but your burdens, saith he, to me, however oppress’d with guilt, however laden beneath the weight and misery of sin, come only to me as your *advocate* and *propitiation*, come only in true trust, *confessing your sins*, and ye shall find me *faithful and just to forgive them*; cast all your burdens upon me, ‡ *on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of you all*, receive my counsel, and *buy of me gold tried in the fire to make you rich, white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see* §—draw near with faith, take my yoke upon you, learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls; for I came not to call

* Matt. vii. 8.

† Revel. iii. 17, 18.

‡ 1 John i. 9, and ii. 1, 2.

§ Ifai. lxi. 6.

the righteous, but sinners to repentance, I came to seek the lost sheep, to receive the returning prodigal."

Christ in these words invites, First, those who were burden'd and oppress'd beneath the weight of the legal ceremonies, which St. Peter calls, *a yoke that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*, * and who from the law could find no reconciliation with God, no rest to their own consciences, as having this dreadful sentence always thundering in their ears, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them* †. Secondly, Those whose consciences so labour and struggle beneath the burden of sin, the wrath of God, and the fear of future judgment, that their heart and spirit is bent down and oppress'd, that they go mourning all the day long, and find no remedy to heal, no means to relieve their wounded souls. And, thirdly, those, who labour beneath the burden of troubles, of outward or inward afflictions, so that they can obtain no worldly comfort; but at length broken in spirit, hum-

* Acts xv. 10, and it is called Gal. v. 1. the Yoke of bondage.

† Gal. iii. 10.

ble and contrite in heart, are led to the knowledge of their sins as the *cause*, and the love of *Jesus* as the cure of them. This is the great use of afflictions, which unless thus sanctified, become the heaviest of burdens to us; and as none of us live without afflictions and troubles of some sort or other, more or less, without some kind chastisements and correcting calls from our heavenly Father; herein is our wisdom, to see and consider them in this view, — as loving rebukes, an happy means to bring us unto him, who hath promised *rest* to all the *labouring* and *heavy-laden*, that come to him for it; and, who hath said, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten* †.

None have either will or power to come to *Christ*, but such as are thus burdened: These by whatever means, God hath been pleased to **draw* them to him, and to open *their hearts*, by his grace and good spirit; by whatever means, he hath been pleased to convince them of sin, and of their own vileness, of the vanity of earthly, and the immense value of eternal things: These alone will come to him, these alone are en-

† Rev. iii. 19. * Isaiah vi. 44. and Acts xvi. 14.

titled to his offers; and these alone are they, who delivered from their present burden shall find present * rest to their souls in peace of conscience here, and future rest in everlasting peace with God in heaven.

For this, Mildly, is what our Lord promises to give; and the greatness of his gift, as it can be priz'd by none, but those who really experience the want of it, so will it be ever sufficient to draw every labouring and heavy-laden soul to him. For what so sweet as rest to the weary? what so grateful as refreshment to the hungry and thirsty soul? what so delicious as a cooling shelter from the scorching sun, as the pure fountain to the panting hart? † Sweeter, far sweeter than all of these, far more delicious and grateful, wronged by every similitude, and infinitely above all comparison is the sense of God's forgiving love in *Christ*, is

* *Christ* is to us in reality, yea, and to all the Patriarchs and Prophets, that which *Noah* was in figure—our rest and consolation. For *Lamech* called his son's name *Noah*, saying, *This same shall COMFORT us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.* Gen. v. 29.

† *David* beautifully cries out, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?* Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

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the sense of his freedom from the yoke and burden, the slavery and guilt of sin, is the sense of his acceptance in the *belov- ed* *, to the soul long labouring under the oppression of iniquity, heavy-laden beneath the burden of condemning guilt, the dread of its eternal wages! And this *rest Christ* offers to *All* † who will come

* Ephes. i. 6.

† It is a delightful reflection to every soul, that the grace of God is thus freely offer'd, that *All* have it in their power, if they will use the due means to obtain eternal life. How different a view of the Father of mercies, and the gospel of peace doth this give us, from the shocking and presumptuous light in which both are represented by the maintainers of particular election and reprobation! may the God of power silence all such doctrines amongst us! and as no improper antidote I subjoin the following passage from the excellent Bishop *Beveridge's* sermon on the *Christian race*. “ In this he (God) would have
“ all run so as to obtain it; this being such a prize,
“ that not only one, but all may have it, that will but
“ run a-right for it; for God is no respecter of persons,
“ he would have all men to be saved, and come to the
“ knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. and according-
“ ly, he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
“ son, that whosoever believeth in him shou'd not perish
“ but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. He excepts
“ against no man; but every one of you may as cer-
“ tainly be a glorified Saint in heaven hereafter, as he
“ is now in this place, if it be not his own fault.
“ God permits, he invites, nay he commands you all
“ to run, so as to obtain eternal life, and therefore if
“ any of you miss of it, they must blame themselves for
“ it;

come to him : who will come burden'd and heavy-laden, take his yoke upon them, *his easy yoke, and light burden, learn of him, meek and lowly as he is,* and so obtain perfect peace and perfect consolation.

We may observe here how excellently the wisdom of God is display'd in the salvation of sinners : for sin is of itself the greatest evil, and, if unrepented of, will constitute the worst part of hell : if we are not *saved* from it here, we *can* * never

“ it: and so they will when it is too late ; they will
“ blame themselves to all eternity for being such fools
“ and madmen, as to lose such a glorious prize, which
“ once they might have had, but would not. The
“ remembrance whereof will be a great aggravation of
“ the misery, that you will then suffer by your own
“ default:—This is a thing much to be observed, and
“ I wish you would always carry it in your minds,
“ even that whatsoever your outward condition may be
“ at present, you are all as yet in a capacity of obtaining the crown of glory. This prize is set before
“ you ALL, and you are all, and every one required
“ to run, so as to obtain it.”

* Very emphatical are our Saviour's words to Nicodemus, John iii. 3. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* He doth not say, he *shall* not, he *must* not — But he *cannot*, while unregenerate he is not in a capacity either for the gospel kingdom, or the kingdom of glory: how *can* a proud, a drunken, an adulterous man have any pleasure, or perceive any joy in the pure love of God, and the chaste delights of the blessed ?

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enter into Heaven hereafter: for such as are our passions and desires when we depart hence, such they will be found when we rise again: since there is no repenting in the grave, no possibility of any future change, if we neglect the present proffers of grace, the present means of regeneration. So that *Christ* offers to deliver us from sin, as the greatest evil, and as our sure obstacle to bliss: and that by making us first sensible of it, then leading us to a sufficient atonement for it, then giving us a rule whereby to walk, which tends immediately to throw down all the strong holds of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to fit us for the enjoyment of God and the fellowship of beatified spirits—*Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

To enlarge a little on this point: — Sin is a grievous and oppressive burden: its service is perfect slavery, the hardest and worst of service it is; *to serve diverse lusts and passions, to live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another* *: But when once the sinners eyes are opened, and his heart begins to condemn him, when once

* Titus iii. 3.

he sees the guilt and misery of this state, and knows that the wages of sin are death; when once he feels the heavy bondage, and finds that a guilty conscience is its own hell; when once he sees a good and merciful God set at an everlasting distance from him, and a bleeding loving Redeemer crucified by his enormous iniquities; when once he beholds the joys of Paradise separated, forever separated from his approach, and blackness, eternal blackness of darkness, reserved for impenitent offenders — when once these reflections lay hold of the conscience, and these terrors of the Lord make the stout hearts to tremble, who can wonder that the load is well nigh too heavy to be borne, that the burden of them is intolerable? who can wonder that when a soul like this is led to the *fountain opened for all uncleanness* *, when a soul like this is led to a Saviour, who is willing and able to remove this more than † *Ætnean* mountain from

* Zechariah xiii: 1.

† The Heathen fables relate, that the burning mountain *Ætna* was cast by *Jupiter* upon the rebellious giant *Enceladus*, concerning whom the poets, and amongst the rest the elegant *Virgil* speaks thus —

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from his breast, who can wonder that in the sense of this love, and this full deliverance, he finds unspeakable rest, and in the change of his yoke, full repose to the soul? For the sinner that *comes to Christ*, sincerely desirous of this rest, must exchange the hard and heavy yoke of his former *Ægyptian* task-masters for the *light and easy one* of his present Lord and Saviour: he must cease to sin, and learn to serve God: he *must take up Christ's cross*, become his disciple, believe his doctrine, submit to his discipline, and give himself up wholly to be ruled and governed by him — *must deny himself*, and *follow* his great exemplar. Thus alone can he find rest. For as faith must bring the sinner to *Christ*, that same faith must cause him to *walk as he hath walked*, to *keep his holy commandments* †; the spirit of God working in him all those heavenly graces

On vast *Enceladus* this pond'rous load
Was thrown, in vengeance, by the thund'ring God:
Who pants beneath the mountain and expires,
Thro' openings huge, the fierce tempestuous fires:
Oft as he shifts his side, the caverns roar,
With smoke and flame the skies are cover'd o'er,
And all *Trinacria* shakes from shore to shore.

PITT, *Æn.* III.

† John ii. 3, 6.

and

and tempers, which adorn and distinguish the Son of God, and heir of heaven, and which are to the soul the *seal* and *earnest* of its inheritance *.

And therefore our Lord adds, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest to your souls.* The sure and natural fruit of *meekness* and *lowliness* or humility, is *rest* and peace; of that *meekness* and *humility* which comprize almost the whole of our duty to God and to man †; teaching us such a perfect resignation and unfeigned submission to the will of the one as to be wholly satisfied with whatever he pleases; such an entire renunciation of self-will, and thorough contentment in every station, as to desire nothing but that the will of God may be done in us; and with regard to the other, teaching us so to prefer all men to ourselves, as to abound in mildness and love to the good; in

* See *Gal.* iv. 22. *Ephes.* i. 13, 14. and iv. 30.

† The learned *Joseph Mede*, in a Sermon on this text, and on the part of it, where speaking of these words *meek* and *lowly*, observes, “Under these two words our Saviour comprehends the whole *habit* of obedience, they being two such dispositions of the mind, as make it tractable and pliable to put on and wear
“ the

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in gentleness, forbearance, and compassion to the evil and unthankful. These heavenly tempers were eminently found in our Lord, and he hath set us an example, nay and commanded us, to *learn* of him, meek humble and lowly lamb of God! of him, who was perfectly resign'd to his Father's good-pleasure, who came not to do, who desired not his *own will but the will of him that sent him*; who was so particularly mild, so tender and compassionate, so gentle and patient, no less to the evil than the good. The nearer we approach to him in these divine tempers, the more *rest* we shall obtain; for you observe, this meekness and humility, this resignation to God's will, and renunciation of our own, this patience, love and gentleness, are the very opposites

“ the yoke he speaks of. As if he had said, I am
 “ wholly qualified to obedience, I am fitted for this
 “ yoke: learn of me to put it on, for I am *meek* and
 “ *lowly*. Now though *lowliness* and *meekness* are of
 “ very near affinity, and such as both of them do dis-
 “ pose a man for the duties of both tables of God's
 “ commandments, yet hath lowliness, as I take it, a
 “ prerogative in our devotion to God-ward, and *meek-*
 “ *ness* is more proper for the duties we owe to our
 “ neighbour, &c.” — He enlarges upon these as the
 reader may see by consulting his sermon Page 158 of
 his works.

to

to that self-sufficient pride and affectation of independency, that vanity, impatience, and envy, that hatred and contempt of others, yea and that love of every thing tending to sin,—to all and each of these which are the adequate causes of that abounding misery and burning uneasiness reigning and raging in the human breast.

And these are things which we may all easily learn, for the love of *Christ* herein is admirable: he doth not say, (as one of the fathers well observes) “Learn of me, for I am great and glorious:” he doth not say, “learn of me to make a world and to perform miracles,”* but he says, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*: this we may all learn: and no man can say that these are graces and tempers, which he cannot imitate, and to which he cannot arrive; 'tis our own faults, if we do not copy herein his divine example: it is and must be our pride and vanity, our love of lust, of sin, and the world, which alone can keep us from being *meek and lowly in heart*.

* *St. Ambrose and Austin.*

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And in truth, when we reflect, that such was the Son of God — *I am meek, &c.* what excuse shall we, poor sinful dust and ashes, have to make, what excuse shall pride power, or place, what excuse shall greatness, pleasure or honour have to offer for themselves, if they disobey the will of God, become not meek and lowly in heart, when he *who made the worlds, who is the brightness of his Father's glory **, and the express image of his person hath in himself set the example, and made this the only road to present and eternal bliss?

I say the *only* road ; for tho' *Christ* hath promis'd us rest,—and his word can never fail: yet it is manifestly upon these conditions †, that we do, first, *come* to him, in sincere faith

as

* Heb. i. 3.

† It is to be hoped the word *conditions* will not disgust any *real* and *sincere* christians: that some may be offended at it, I neither doubt nor regard: some who are for following *Christ* so far as to *receive* from him, so far as unto the breaking of bread—but are not willing to hear what they *must* do, and *must* have done in them in *return*: if such should be offended, that I affirm the promises of *present* and *eternal* rest to be conditional, I shall not be surprized: Christians desirous to shew *their faith by their works*, I am sure will not; and to the

as the only redeemer of our souls, able and willing to save, as our only advocate and propitiation, as our only sure trust and confidence, truly deploring, heartily lamenting, and steadfastly resolving to forsake all our former sins and misdoings: that we do, secondly, *take his yoke upon us*, obey his doctrine and submit to his discipline, *denying ungodliness, and wordly lusts, and living righteously, soberly and godly in this present world* *: that we do, thirdly, *learn of him*, follow the example of his meekness and lowliness, *walk as he walked, and purify ourselves even as he is pure* †. If we do not on our parts perform these condi-

the others, I cannot recommend a more proper remark, than this which I find in Dr. *Waterland's* preface to *Blair's* sermon's, p. 10. edit. 2d. "I am apprehensive
"that by our unwary confutation of the *Popish* errors,
"concerning *merit* and *supererogation*, we have too
"much depreciated *good works* themselves: whereas it
"is most certain they ought to be highly had in esti-
"mation: not only as the genuine *signs* and *fruits* of
"a lively faith, but as necessary *conditions* of *salvation*:
"and not only of *salvation*, but of our *growth* in grace,
"and of our advancement to higher degrees of glory."

Vol. I. sermon 21, 374. For the justifying the term *conditions*, the reader who has any scruples, may consult *Bishop Bull*, in his *Harmonia*, &c. and *bishop Stillingfleet* in his answer to Mr. *Lebb*.

* Titus ii. 12.

† John iii. 3.

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ditions uniting all our efforts, and seeking for continual aid and support from the throne of grace; with whatever hopes of present or future *rest* we may lull and delude our own souls, most infallibly certain it is, we have no right to expect it from *Christ*: most infallibly certain it is, in the end we shall be found miserable deceivers of ourselves, which is of all deceits the worst.

But if on the contrary we do come to him in faith, and endeavour to the utmost of our poor ability to lead godly, righteous and sober lives; meek and lowly; resign'd, patient, and gentle; then we shall for ourselves experience the truth of his divine words — *my yoke is easy* *, and *my burden light*.

We

* *Easy*—the original word *χρητός* signifies *ayabos*, good and something more, *good in the highest degree*, and is rendered 1 *Pet.* ii. 3. *gracious*, the Seventy render it. *Psal.* xxxiv. 8. O taste and see *ὅτι χρητός ὁ κυριός*, that the Lord is *gracious*. And so *το χρητὸν αὐτοῦ*, *Rom.* ii. 4. the *bounty of God*, that which is immediately before • *πλετος χρητομεντος*, the *riches of his bounty*. And proportionably here *Christ's yoke*, the precepts which he lays on his disciples, (being of all other the things most agreeable to our human rational nature, and which by them who did not think men bound to do them have yet

We shall then find that his yoke is easy and his burden light, not only in itself but in comparison of all other yokes and burdens, beneath which we have groaned, as of the law, of sin, the world, and the flesh — and in freedom from which, thro' the truth * we shall no less rejoice than captives redeemed from the deep dungeons, and oppressive irons of blood-thirsty tyrants. We shall then find, that the bearing of the cross, the denying ourselves and following Jesus, though hard at first perhaps to corrupt human nature, will through the grace of God, become the greatest joy and consolation to the soul. We shall then find that the service of this dear and loving

yet been counted most excellent in them that did practise them, and which, if the one custom of sin did not make us incompetent judges of it, would appear to us, the fittest for our turns, the most pleasurable, profitable and honourable of all things) are here said by him not only to be a good, but a *gracious, benign, bounteous yoke*, that any man is the better for taking on him; and if he considered it well, he would put it on, of his own accord, prefer it before liberty, or any other service. *Hammond on the place.*

* See St. John viii. 31, 32, *If ye continue in my word (said Christ) then are ye my disciples indeed: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,*

C

master

master is perfect freedom, that his *commandments are not grievous*, since every one that is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory, even our *faith**; we shall find all his heavenly precepts plain, and easy to be understood, good and pleasant to be practis'd, especially thro' his grace preventing and assisting us, especially thro' his favour, and merit recommending and compleating our weak and imperfect services. Yea, we shall find his testimonies the very joy and † delight of our souls, as being all fulfilled in *love*, whose very nature is sweetness and peace, and which is “so great
 “a good, that it maketh every burden
 “light, and beareth with equanimity all the
 “vicissitudes of life. ‡” We shall soon find

* John v. 3, 4.

† See Psalm cxix. 92, cxi. and xix. 8, 10. &c. &c.

‡ See *Thomas à Kempis*, and particularly ch. 12. b. ii. Our poet *Waller* in his poem on Divine Love, canto 3. has these sweet lines, happy had it been for him if, as he beautifully wishes,

(‘O that my youth, had thus employ’d my pen,’)—

no other theme had ever given his soul delight.

Love as he lov’d! — how can we soar so high?

He can add wings, when he commands to fly;

Nor

find that the natural tendency of *Christ's* doctrine and discipline is no less to inform the judgment concerning the most important points, and to settle the will in the right choice of them, than to direct the passions and affections aright, and to destroy and mortify in us, all those evil and corrupt desires which naturally tend to make men miserable here, and more so

Nor should we be with this command dismay'd,
He that examples gives will give us aid :
For he took flesh, that where his precepts fail,
His practice, as a pattern, may prevail :
His love at once and dread, instruct our thought,
As man he suffered, and as God he taught.
Will for the deed he takes : we may with ease
Obedient be, for if we love, we please.
Weak though we are to love is no hard task,
And love for love is all that heav'n doth ask.
Love ! that would all men just and temp'rate make,
Kind to themselves and others for his sake.

'Tis with our minds, as with a fertile ground ;
Wanting this love, they must with weeds abound :
(Unruly passions) whose effects are worse,
Than thorns and thistles springing from the curse.

And again, canto v.

Love as he lov'd ! — a love so unconfin'd,
With arms extended wou'd embrace mankind :
Self-love wou'd cease, or be dilated, when
We should behold as many selves as men :
All of one family, in blood ally'd,
His precious blood, that for our ransom dy'd !

hereafter: — for one great end of the Son of God's taking our nature upon him, was that we should be delivered from the present evil nature of sin, and the tyranny of Satan built thereupon; that we should put off the old man and put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: that a new nature by the spirit should be derived into us from *Christ* our head, a new nature abounding with all the new fruits of the spirit; and that our old nature should be destroyed and crucified, with all its old affections and lusts, — And when by faith coming to *Christ*, we thus take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, we shall then find in that yoke *rest* to our souls indeed; rest from all our former burdens; rest from the thunderings of the law, from the power and condemnation of sin, from the dread and fear of death; rest from the stings of conscience; rest from the dread of future and almighty wrath. And we shall find rest, in the sense of *Christ's* infinite love to us; rest in the sense of our free forgiveness and gracious acceptance with

with the Father; rest in the happy sense of our adoption; in the comfort and consolation of the Spirit; in the joyful testimony of our own conscience; rest in the pleasing sense that we are doing that work, and discharging that duty for which we were born; rest in the glad remembrance that though imperfectly, yet if discharged sincerely and with a true heart, our frail and feeble offices will be accepted of the Father as perfect and entire for the sake and merits of his beloved Son; rest shall we find in the blessed hope of everlasting life; and when death shall be swallowed up in victory, rest, eternal rest to our souls shall we find and enjoy with God in heaven!

And is not the yoke of Christ easy, — is not then his burden light, — is not his service perfect freedom, — is not his rest, oh Christian! earnestly to be desired by thy thirsty, thy labouring and heavy-laden soul — his rest, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace? Can the hungry and thirsty soul want persuasions to come, eat and drink when plen-

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teous supplies are freely presented to him? Can the weary traveller refuse refreshing rest kindly offered? Can the shipwreck'd mariner want invitations to come on shore, from raging tempests and the merciless waves? much less surely can we need persuasion to come and receive this gift from *Christ*, so beset on all sides with the guilt and power of sin, with the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, with corrupt affections and prevailing lusts—so surrounded with sorrows and disquietude, so unable to procure peace and rest to our souls, in such imminent danger of present ruin, of future and eternal woe? Oh come unto the merciful, compassionate and long-suffering *Jesus*, *Come all ye that labour and are heavy-laden; Come unto Me*, are his own affectionate and inviting words: and *the spirit and the bride say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take of this water of life freely**. Could you, my brethren, refuse this word of love, supposing your Lord himself was standing

* Rev. xli. 17.

amongst you, and making this gracious and kind offer to you all? doubtless you would make uncommon haste to fly to him, doubtless you would lay all your burdens at his feet, gladly take up his cross, deny yourselves, and follow the lamb wheresoever he should lead! *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God **. In *Christ's stead*, in his place, as his messenger, minister and ambassador, I pray you, I earnestly entreat, advise and exhort you, to *come* to him, and take his *heavenly yoke upon you* — I beseech you, dearly beloved in the name of our bleeding master, and for the sake of your own souls, be ye reconciled to God, *come* to *Christ*, your only mediator and redeemer, and learn of him, so shall ye find *rest to your souls*.

But alas, what can his ministers do, when insensible of sin, and blind to their own unworthiness, men have no desire to attain this rest, for they feel not the want

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

of it? None but the *labouring* and *heavy-laden* can come to *Christ*: How then can they come who full of their own fancied righteousness, think themselves strong enough to bear their own burdens, acknowledging neither the weight nor guilt of sin, nor the want of an almighty sufferer? How can they come, who place all their religion in form, and depend wholly upon outward services and nominal profession, not on the merits of *Christ* for salvation — or who, worse than these, — vile and senseless hypocrites, — make the blessed gospel of *Christ*, a mere stalking horse for worldly and unrighteous purposes? How can they come, who continue in a course of impiety, without remorse, without restraint, regardless of the law, and *insensible* of the wrath of God, who have *their consciences seared*, as it were, with an *hot iron**, *past feeling, working all uncleanness with greediness*? How can they come, who are so buried and inebriated in the delights of sense, the pleasures, profits and vanities of

* 1 Tim. iv. 2. Ephes. iv. 19.

this poor transitory world, that they never knew a serious thought of the divine grace of God, and the gift of eternal life, that they have never cast one longing look, or raised one pious eye to heaven; that they never yet in godly fear have enquired, *what they shall do to be saved?* * How can they come, who, when afflictions befall them, and God lays his heavy and correcting hand upon them, * perversely struggle beneath the burden, impatient and discontent, and give themselves up to sour melancholy and black despair, rather than come with all their cares to *Christ*? How can any of these receive our Lord's invitation? and think, my brethren, how large a part of the world is comprised in these: — But may God grant better things to each one of you: may he by his spirit open your eyes to a due knowledge of yourselves and the exceeding sinfulness of sin: and surely, if ye would duly and impartially examine your own hearts, and bring to the clear light of the gospel, the many evil *thoughts*,

* Acts xvi. 40.

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words, and actions which crowd in condemnation against you, the many shameful commissions of evil, the many no less shameful omissions of good — and consider, if ye will not thus judge yourselves here, every thought, word, and action must and will be weighed in the exactest balance by a just and sin-avenging judge hereafter *, — would you then but seriously examine and judge yourselves, "that you be not judged of the Lord, you could not fail being heavy-laden indeed under the sense of so many sins, you could not

* The inimitable author of *Night-Thoughts*, thus finely expatiates on the folly of neglecting that awful consideration.

Shall man alone, whose fate, whose *final* fate,
Hangs on that hour, exclude it from his thought?
I think of nothing else — I see, I feel it!
All nature like an earthquake trembling round:
All deities, like summer's swarms, on wing!
All basking in the full meridian blaze!
I see the *JUDGE* inthroned! the flaming guard!
The volume open'd; open'd every heart!
A sun-beam pointing out each secret thought!
No patron, intercessor none! now past
The sweet, the clement mediatorial hour!
For guilt no plea; to pain no pause, no bound!
Inexorable, all! and all extreme!

Consolation p. 148.

help

help feeling and confessing *that the remembrance of them is grievous, the burden of them intolerable*; you cou'd not fail earnestly to repent, and heartily to be sorry for these your misdoings," for the very least of which you can make no amends to God; which have all been committed under such aggravating circumstances, against so much light, and so much grace; committed even by *Christians*, by persons *baptised* and dedicated to the ever blessed and holy trinity; by those, who have promised; — *promised* even to the *faithful* God, — to renounce all sin, the world and the devil, committed against a God, who is all love to assist in every good course; whose spirit is continually striving and struggling in the evil and rebellious hearts of men; against a God, who, to redeem us from sin, and its certain wages, so great is his love to us, hath given his only-begotten, his best-beloved Son, to die for us, and to become our propitiation and surety! — And must not the sense of offending such a God and Father,

tread-

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treading under foot and despising the most precious blood of such a Lord and Saviour, of grieving, and quenching the holy admonitions of such a guide and comforter—must not this stir you up to reflection, and cause you in fear and anguish of soul, to fly to him, who with open arms stands ready to receive, yea and prepared to *run and meet* every returning, humbled and suppliant prodigal!

But if these considerations, joined to the knowledge, which you all have of the present misery and disquietude, and the future sore condemnation of a life of sin, if these are not sufficient to awaken you,—if these joined to the infinite love of *Jesus*, are not sufficient to bring you unto him; yet let us pray, that by his grace, through some means or other, he may, ere it be too late, cause you to feel and labour under your burden: and when it doth please him to lay any affliction upon you, whether in mind, body or estate, whether in yourselves or your friends, — when he opens your eyes to see the emptiness of all worldly blessings,

blessings, the vanity of every thing beneath the sun; when he causes you to *labour and be heavy laden*; then take especial heed, that you frustrate not the good favour and grace of God towards you: that you despise not, nor abuse his loving and fatherly chastisements: but carefully descend into yourselves, examine your own hearts, look to your past lives — and when the true cause of all troubles shall appear, when your sins shall manifest themselves, and your conscience shall join in the testimony; then remember these blessed words of the Lord Jesus, *Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; and as it is the very nature of afflictions to humble the mind, the cross of Christ will be found so much the more easy to you, so much the more easily will you learn of your suffering Lord, to be meek and lowly in heart: Come therefore to him with all your burdens, cast all your care and put all your confidence in him; set humbly with *Martba* at his feet, and carefully listen to his divine voice and doctrine;

Come

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Come to him, there where he hath *promised* ever to be *present*, in his word and sacraments, as rightly and duly administered by his church: attend him diligently in all the means of grace; seek him with fervour, with sincerity, with persevering importunity; with believing reliance on his sacred promise to bless and sanctify the means to every thirsty soul; be resigned wholly to his will, glad to bear his cross, and to be conformed to his divine example; renounce all self-esteem, self-seeking and self-will, and let it be your meat and drink to do your heavenly Father's will: your chief and constant care, to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and towards man; that so you may be perfected in love, and so possess that heavenly rest and peace which surpasseth all understanding; which *Christ* here promiseth to *All* who will *come* to him for it, and which you may *All* of consequence obtain, for you *All* have it in your power, so that if you receive it not, it will be wholly your own faults, — and which when once
ob-

obtained, you will find to be indeed the *pearl of great price*, and think the sale of *all you have* but small to give in purchase of it.

That therefore we may one, and all of us, so come to *Christ*, so take his yoke upon us and learn of him, as to procure this blessed and everlasting rest, God of his infinite mercy grant thro' the merits of the same *Jesus Christ*, his Son, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*



The Father of Christ's love
obtained you will not be hindered
by any great water, and think the love of
the Father to give in person
of his

That therefore we may one, and all of
us, to come to Christ, to take his love
from us and learn of him, as to pro-
cure this blessed and everlasting rest,
God of his infinite mercy grant into
the merits of the same Jesus Christ,
his Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

